

REMARKS

The application has been amended and is believed to be in condition for allowance.

The case was filed with claims 1-9.

Claims 1-5, 7, and 9 have been canceled. New claims 10-27 have been added. Claim 10 is a new composite slab claim and claim 22 is a new method claim.

The specification has been amended as to form.

The Official Action objected to the drawing figures due to informalities. Responsively, drawing Figure 3 has been amended to change element "3" to "13".

New Figure 4 has been added which illustrates the recited method/process claims.

Withdrawal of the drawing objection is solicited.

Claims 6-8 were objected to as being of improper dependent form. Responsively, claim 6 has been amended to be in independent form.

Claims 1-5 were rejected as anticipated by TONCELLI 4,909,974.

Claims 6-9 were rejected as obvious over TONCELLI.

The presently pending claims are believed to patentably recite the present invention.

TONCELLI does not disclose a process (claim 6) that results in a multi-layer composite slab product, with first and

second dense layers of stone material and an expanded material layer intermediate to the first and second layers, the first and second layers being surface layers, and the expanded layer being less than said each of the first and second layers.

Further, the reference does not disclose the specifically recited steps. That is, there is no disclosure of distribution of the stone material together with a binding agent in a mold and then positioning on this first layer a pre-cast support of expanded agglomerate. The reference teaches that each of the layers are of the same material and therefore there is no pre-cast support of expanded agglomerate. Further note the new recitation that the pre-cast support is less dense than the surface layers. There is no disclosure of distributing further stone material to form a second layer on the pre-cast support. Lastly, there is no disclosure of vibro-compression, in a single step, of the two layers surrounding the one pre-cast support.

To clarify that there is only one vibro-compression step, the claim has been amended to recite that prior to any vibro-compression the pre-cast support is placed on the first layer of stone material.

In view of the above, it is believed clear that the recited method is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by the applied reference. Further, the recitations of using expanded clay granules are not disclosed as per claim 8.

Original claim 1 has been canceled and new claim 10 added. Claim 10 recites the invention as comprising first and second dense layers of a first material agglomerate and a first binding agent. Further recited is an expanded material layer in compressive direct contact with the first and second layers and intermediate the first and second layers, the second layer being of an expanded material agglomerate and a second binding agent. The claim further comprises that the first and second dense layers are surface layers and that the expanded material layer has a lower density than each of the first and second layers.

The reference does not teach an expanded material layer in compressive contact with first and second layers, the first and second layers being surface layers. The reference does not teach the expanded material layer having a lower density than the surface layers. Accordingly, claim 10 is believed allowable.

The reference does not teach a perimeter lateral edge surface that completely conceals the expanded material layer, as per claim 12.

Claims 13-14 are also not believed to be disclosed for the reasons discussed above in that there is recited different densities and concealing the intermediate layers.

The recitations of claim 15, reciting the first material and expanded material are not disclosed by the reference.

Claims 19-21 recite specific non-obvious dimensions and characteristics of the invention not taught by the reference.

Allowance of these claims is therefore solicited.

Claims 22-27 recite the inventive method in a manner believed to be patentable over the prior art.

The applied reference does not teach surrounding a pre-cast support made of an expanded agglomerate and a first binding agent with a mixture of stone agglomerates and a second binding agent, and then vibro-compressing, in a single step, this mixture. Accordingly, claim 22 is believed allowable.

Claims 23-27 include features previously discussed and are believed to be allowable in their own right.

In view of the above, applicants respectfully request that all the claims be allowed.

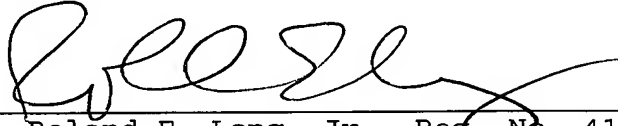
Applicants believe that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any

overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional  
fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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REL/mjr  
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**APPENDIX:**

The Appendix includes the following item(s):

- a Replacement Sheet for Figure 3 of the drawings and  
a new Figure 4

**AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:**

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Figure 3. This sheet, which includes Figures 1-3, replaces the original sheet including Figures 1-3.

Figure 3 has been amended to change element "3" to "13".

New Figure 4 has been added which illustrates the recited method/process claims.

Attachment:     One Replacement Sheet  
                  One New drawing sheet